



Women's Issues

October 24, 2024

Utah voters ranked abortion and women's rights issues as medium importance in the 2024 Utah Priorities Project. Many of the Project's open-ended survey responses related to the issue focused on abortion specifically, which is perhaps not surprising given the relatively recent repeal of Roe v. Wade. Open-ended comments also often addressed economic inequality between men and women.

Women and Democrats were three and seven percentage points, respectively, more likely than men and Republicans to prioritize women's issues. Ideology also affected survey results, with liberals twelve percentage points more likely than conservatives and 3% more likely than moderates to prioritize the issue. Income also exhibited an interesting effect on results, with higher-income respondents being five percentage points more likely than those with lower incomes to prioritize the issue. Renters were five percentage points more likely than homeowners to prioritize the issue. Those who self-identified as non-religious were five percentage points more likely than religious voters to prioritize the issue.

Marriage and Children

To provide additional background insights, Utah Priorities Project survey respondents were specifically asked to choose which of two statements best represented their views. The choice was between "Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority" and "Society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children." Republicans were far more likely than Democrats to select the first option – prioritizing marriage and having children. (See Figure 1.)

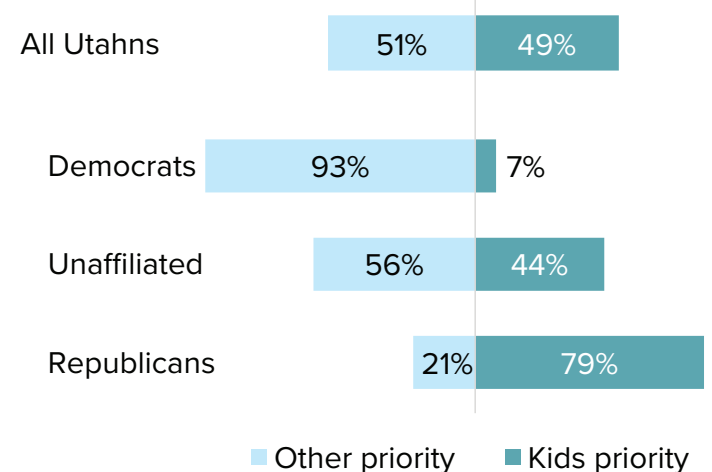
Simultaneously, conservatives and religious voters were more likely than liberals and the non-religious to choose the first option. Differences were less stark by race and ethnicity but still existent. Non-white non-Hispanic/Latino voters considered

marriage and children a priority by a margin of twelve percentage points relative to Hispanic/Latino voters and white non-Hispanic/Latino voters.

Utah Priorities Project survey respondents were also concerned with gender-based economic inequality. This is perhaps appropriate since, according to the Utah Women and Leadership project, when considering "the median female wage compared to the median male wage...Utah ranks worst in the nation."¹ Data from 2022 highlight that women ages 16 and older earned 61% of their male counterparts.²

Republicans are more likely to prioritize children and marriage.

Figure 1: Whether "Society is Better Off if People Make Marriage and Having Children a Priority," or "Society is Just as Well Off if People Have Priorities Other Than Marriage and Children."



Source: Utah Foundation survey.

Current Abortion Legality in Utah

Given the relatively recent Supreme Court action repealing *Roe v. Wade*, as well as legislative and Planned Parenthood responses to the repeal, it should also come as little surprise that Utahns, in general, are interested in the topic as a priority. At present, abortion in Utah remains legal for up to 18 weeks of gestation under state law. This situation will hold until courts rule on the constitutionality of a near-complete abortion ban that was supposed to be automatically triggered by the repeal of *Roe v. Wade*.³ If the courts allow state statute to take effect, abortions would only be permitted in cases of rape and incest (up to 18 weeks of gestation) and in cases where the mother's life or health is at risk or the fetus has a severe brain abnormality or health conditions that limit its viability.⁴ Utah statute later moved to prevent abortion clinics from being licensed in the future and phase out existing licenses. This would restrict abortions to hospitals only.⁵

Survey Opinions on Abortion

When addressing abortion, opinions often vary based on the way in which a question is posed. Voters consider the issue of abortion in a nuanced way that may be hard to capture in just a few survey questions. Consequently, Utahns' opinions on abortion compared to the nation vary based on the details of the question. Overall, Utahns are gen-

erally less supportive of abortion than the nation. About 45% of Utah's population prefers legality in most cases, compared to 64% of the nation. However, Utah is among the top 10 states least supportive of abortion being illegal in all cases.⁶

Utah's support for *Roe v. Wade* generally also appears quite similar to the nation. A national survey undertaken by The Pew Research Center notes that nearly six-in-ten Americans (57%) disapprove of the court's repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, including 43% who *strongly* disapprove. Nationally, only about 41% approve of the court's decision, with 25% *strongly* approving. Not surprisingly, partisan differences on the abortion issue are palpable, with Republicans and Democrats sharply divided in their initial views of the recent decision.⁷ Nearly identical to Pew's findings, a 2019 survey of Utah voters found that 58% preferred the Supreme Court not to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, while 42% preferred to see the decision overturned.⁸

Utahns' opinions on the current state legislation also appear nuanced. According to a recent survey by the Hinckley Institute of Politics, 52% of Utahns disapprove of a 2023 law that would require all abortions to be performed in hospitals.⁹ Simultaneously, the same poll also shows that 52% of Utah voters approve of an earlier law that would ban elective abortions and allow it only under limited circumstances.¹⁰

Since 1945, leaders, legislators, and community members have relied upon the illuminating, independent, and nonpartisan public-policy research produced by the Utah Foundation to support informed decision-making on topics that matter most. As a 501(c)3 with broad community support and a 60-member board, the Utah Foundation exists to empower civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life for Utahns.

This research brief was written by Research Analyst John Salevurakis with assistance from other Utah Foundation staff.

Endnotes

1. Utah State University, "Labor Force Participation Among Utah Women: A 2023 Update", 2023, <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/blog/2023/labor-force-2023>.
2. Ibid.
3. The Associated Press, "Utah's near-total Abortion Ban to Remain Blocked Until Lower Court Assesses its Constitutionality," 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/abortion-utah-trigger-law-supreme-court-53d1705554419be862400ff60b93e01c>; Third Judicial Court of Salt Lake County, "Planned Parenthood Association of Utah v. State of Utah et al.," 2022, <https://clearinghouse-umich-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/doc/135034.pdf>; And Supreme Court of the State of Utah, "Planned Parenthood Association of Utah v. State of Utah et al.," 2024, <https://legacy.utcourts.gov/opinions/supopin/Planned%20Parenthood%20Association%20v.%20State20240801.pdf>.
4. Utah State Legislature, "Senate Bill 174," 2020, <https://le.utah.gov/~2020/bills/static/sb0174.html>.
5. Utah State legislature, "House Bill 467," 2023, <https://le.utah.gov/~2023/bills/static/HB0467.html>.
6. PRRI, "Abortion Views in All 50 States: Findings from PRRI's 2023 American Values Atlas," 2024, <https://www.prrri.org/research/abortion-views-in-all-50-states-findings-from-prris-2023-american-values-atlas/>.
7. Pew Research Center, "Majority of Public Disapproves of Supreme Court's Decision To Overturn Roe v. Wade," 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/07/06/majority-of-public-disapproves-of-supreme-courts-decision-to-overturn-roe-v-wade/>.
8. Utah Policy, "Majority of Utahns oppose overturning Roe v. Wade," 2019, <https://utahpolicy.com/archive/21502-majority-of-utahns-oppose-overturning-roe-v-wade>
9. The Deseret News, "Poll: 52% of Utahns Oppose Law that Would Require all Abortions to be Performed in Hospitals," 2023, <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2023/6/15/23751183/poll-results-approval-abortion-restrictions/>.
10. Ibid.

Special thanks to the following for providing project-based support:

LARRY H. & GAIL
MILLER
FAMILY FOUNDATION



BUILDING AMERICA®

